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LETTERS.

DISPELLING ALL DOUBTS

Los Angeles

As the author of the A.C.L.U.-Southern California resolution on C.I.A.-F.O.I.A., passed by the national board of directors of the A.C.L.U. in January, and speaking on behalf of the Southern California chapter, I would like to clarify the meaning and purpose of that resolution, which we perceived and intended differently than did Angus Mackenzie in his editorial in the issue of April 27 ("Welcome Reversal"; also see correction, May 4).

The policy of the A.C.L.U. has long been, and continues to be, a commitment to maximizing public access to government information under the F.O.I.A. This commitment has been demonstrated by substantial expenditures of precious funds and volunteer efforts in support of F.O.I.A. litigation.

The internal A.C.L.U. debate over H.R. 5164, the C.I.A.-F.O.I.A. bill passed last year, centered only on preferable tactical approaches to dealing with access problems to C.I.A. files, and on means of avoiding or resolving such tactical disputes, both within the A.C.L.U. and between the A.C.L.U. and its traditional allies in civil liberties struggles. Throughout this debate, the A.C.L.U. staff continued in its efforts in the courts and in public forums to oppose the use of national security justifications by the C.I.A. and other government agencies to restrict unduly public access to government information.

The A.C.L.U. resolution approved in January was just that—a resolution and not a new policy or a policy amendment. Its purpose was to correct any misperception that the A.C.L.U. has retreated from its historical position in the vanguard of efforts to promote open government and the public's right to know.

The California affiliates and the national A.C.L.U. have never differed on those policy goals, and do not differ now. If the January resolution did not dispel any doubts to the contrary, we hope this letter will.

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